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RESULTS OF AN ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY¹

By LESLIE SPIER

COMMENCING with the year 1872 a series of announcements have been made regarding the archeology of the valley of Delaware river which have been of great interest to American archeologists. In that year Dr Charles C. Abbott noted the presence of crude artifacts, which he styled paleolithic implements, in the Trenton gravel and also occasionally associated with the ordinary forms of flint arrowheads and other relics of the historic Indian. His conclusion, based wholly on the results of his own research, was "that the valley of the Delaware has yielded sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that it was occupied by man representing three distinct stages of culture: Paleolithic man, Argillite man, and the historic Indian."²

These horizons of human occupancy were found occurring in three distinct geological strata. First, in the black soil, discolored by decaying organic matter, were artifacts of widely varying character—the indisputable remains of the historic Delaware Indians; second, in the yellow soil immediately beneath were crude implements of argillite and quartzite; and third, in the river gravels, occurred rough artifacts attributed to paleolithic man.

The conclusions of Dr Abbott are substantiated by Mr Ernest Volk, whose investigation was under the direction of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. In his voluminous report³ Volk expresses his general conclusion that "the traces of man in the yellow soil must be regarded as pre-Indian for two reasons; first, because the characteristic traces of regular Indian occupancy found

¹ Presented at the meeting of the American Anthropological Association, New York, December 29, 1913.

² Charles C. Abbott, *Archæologia Nova Cæsarea*, vol. 3, p. 82.

³ Ernest Volk, *The Archaeology of the Delaware Valley, Papers of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University*, vol. v, 1911.

in the black soil, except the intrusions made from that level, cease to appear below the black, and second, because the traces of man's work in the yellow soil were limited to quartzite pebbles broken by fracturing and fire, and to implements made of argillite."¹ His conclusion with regard to the occurrence of a paleolithic culture-horizon is based on his belief that artifacts are in situ in the Trenton gravel, and therefore that man was living in the Delaware valley at a time antedating or coincident with the deposition of the river gravels, whatever the age of that deposition be.

These claimants for great antiquity of man in New Jersey, however, have never asserted that "Argillite Man" and "Paleolithic Man" were racially distinct from the historic Indian.

Such was the status of archeology in New Jersey, when, in April 1912, the legislature of that state authorized the commencement of archeological investigations under the direction of the Geological Survey of New Jersey. The Department of Anthropology of the American Museum of Natural History inaugurated this third systematic archeological research in the summer of 1912. The prosecution of this investigation has, even at this early date, been productive of results sufficiently definite for presentation to those interested in the archeology of New Jersey.

The claims for the occurrence of pre-Delaware culture horizons were based on a series of finds in one particular area—that about Trenton. It was evident that, before a general statement could be made, the inferences based on this material must be substantiated by evidence from other localities. The first problem was to fix upon localities where investigation might be pursued.

The archeological information at hand was, however, very meager. The immediate necessity for a fund of accurate information as to the character and distribution of remains was quite apparent. To remedy this fundamental defect, and to serve as a basis for the development of a definite plan for future investigation, a tentative list of archeological remains was compiled by the members of the survey staff, Messrs Alanson Skinner, Max Schrabisch, and the writer. Our chief attention was given to the surface remains, to

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

determine their distribution, and to seek evidences for or against their homogeneity.

At the end of the successful field season of 1912 there was attempted the correlation of the field notes with regard to the geographical position of each site. This study¹ has yielded a definite conception of the distribution of remains within the state. The occurrence of sites in certain general groups was unmistakably significant.

Historical records were the chief sources of information regarding the distribution of the Indian before the archeological survey was undertaken. A tradition, found among the descendants of the old settlers, states that the aborigines lived for the greater part of the year in the Delaware river valley and about Raritan bay, and that they journeyed at certain seasons into the interior and to the coast to hunt and fish. Historical evidence, obtained from the missionary-journalists,² supports this tradition, and adds that the Lenni Lenâpé were in three divisions. The portions of the state occupied by these divisions differed widely as to physiographic characteristics; and it was from these, according to Brinton, that they obtained the names Minsi, Unami, and Unalachtigo. The Minsi occupied the northern, mountainous part of the Delaware river valley; to the south of these, occupying the territory between the mouth of Hudson river and the Delaware river about Trenton, dwelt the Unami; and in the low-lying region about Delaware bay lived the Unalachtigo.

While our list of sites is in no way complete, the positive results of our survey tend to confirm traditional and historical evidence. Few traces of permanent settlement are to be found along the Atlantic coast; but frequent use of the same site during the fishing season is evidenced by the shell-heaps and camp débris. The flat, sandy interior appears, from the comparatively few traces of occupancy found there, to have been but a hunting preserve. The great mass of the camps and villages lie in the valley of the Delaware

¹ A Preliminary Report of the Archæological Survey of the State of New Jersey, *Bulletin 9, Geological Survey of New Jersey*, 1913.

² Hrdlička, The Crania of Trenton, *Bulletin American Museum of Natural History*, vol. 16, art. 3, pp. 34-40, New York, 1902.

and on the western side of the mouth of Hudson river. Groups of villages are found at three points in the Delaware valley: first near Belvidere, at the foot of the mountainous country; second, centering about Trenton; and third, on Cohansey creek, which empties into Delaware bay. A fourth great group was found on the western side of Staten island and along the adjacent shore of Raritan bay. Between the village groups sites are widely scattered. The coincidence of the distribution of remains with historical and traditional evidence warrants the conclusion that practically all the surface remains are those of the Lenni Lenâpé of the period of colonization.

Although the distribution of the superficial surface remains, when viewed collectively, was found to agree with the distribution of the historic Indian, yet the differences between individual sites was sufficiently great to indicate their lack of homogeneity.

A specific instance of this heterogeneity occurs in the area between the headquarters of the Unami at Staten island and that at Trenton. A group of sites, visited by the writer during the field season of 1913, lies at the foot of the Watchung mountains on the watershed of Raritan river. The characteristics of these sites differ in a marked degree from those usually found in Lenâpé camps. As evidenced by the surface indications, the peculiarities of these sites are an uncommon abundance of the commoner implements, and a great rarity of the finer artifacts, the total absence of pottery, of shell pits and heaps, of animal bones and other camp débris, with the exception of a few fire-cracked stones. There are two distinct types of sites in this group: the first is characterized by the preponderance of crude argillite blades, with which are a very few small, but well-made, black flint and yellow jasper arrowpoints; the second shows equal quantities of well-made argillite, quartzite, flint, jasper, and trap-rock specimens—a condition similar to that obtaining in Lenâpé camps near this region. There is apparently no relation between the cultural characteristics and the geographic position of the sites in this group.

It has been suggested that the presence of remains in this region was due to bands traveling between the two headquarters of the Unami, or to some such occupancy as that described in a

tradition retained in this region and on Staten island, which states that the Indian, even at a comparatively late date, left the villages on Staten island and about Raritan bay in the autumn to winter in the sheltered valley at the foot of the Watchung mountains.

Beyond the fact that these sites do not lie in the direct line of communication between the two headquarters, the writer can but arbitrarily state that in his opinion the first suggestion does not account for the presence of these sites. The tradition may account for their existence, but it neither offers nor suggests a reason for their lack of homogeneity. The remains resulting from an occupancy such as that described by the tradition are not those which are found on some of the sites. The total absence of camp *débris*—so far as is known—is the most apparent characteristic of the camps. Were all of these camps occupied at a comparatively late date there would exist today on each camp site evidence of that fact in the slowly decomposing *débris* which blackens the soil of so many camps of known modernity. Then, too, the number of sites within this limited area is too large for all to have belonged to that period designated by tradition. The lack of homogeneity, coupled with the disparity between the number of sites and the number that would probably have resulted had the region been occupied only during the designated period, calls for another reason for their existence besides that which ascribes the remains to the Lenni Lenâpé of the colonial period.

Nor is this region unique in containing sites of heterogeneous character. There is reported at least one site, among the villages of the Unalachtigo on Cohansey creek, where crude argillite tools alone occur. It has also been observed that the lowest layers of *débris* in the rock shelters of northern New Jersey, Westchester county, New York, and Pike county, Pennsylvania, and in the shell-heaps at Keyport, exhibit crude tools and no pottery, although the upper layers are rife with the remains of the historic Indian. The consistent reports from independent observers in widely separated localities of the prevalence of the same conditions are proof that this is indeed a problem for serious study.